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Monument in commemoration

of faithful colored mammies.

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A Monument in Commemoration of the Faithful Colored Mammies of the South

SPEECH

OF

HON. CHARLES M. STEDMAN

OF NORTH CAROLINA

ON

H. R. 13672

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 9, 1923

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SPEECH

OF

HON. CHARLES M. STEDMAN.

Mr. STEDMAN. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, I am very grateful to the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. BYRNS] for his kindness and for the honor bestowed upon me by the privilege of diverting for a brief interval the attention of the House from the measure now being considered to one which has been referred to the Committee on the Library, and for which I am expecting favorable consideration. I call it to your attention at the present time in behalf of those who earnestly desire its passage at an early date on account of its merits. I have reference to House bill 13672.

The erection of monuments is a custom which dates back to remote ages. It is not transmitted from one generation to another but is the offspring of exalted sentiment and high ideals. They mark the resting place of those who have brought renown to their country upon the field of battle or have contributed to its prosperity and happiness in times of peace. But you will search the history of all ages in vain for the record of any people who have erected a monument to another race or to any class of that race dwelling among them to perpetuate the memory of qualities which entitle them to remembrance and gratitude.

The bill introduced in the House should find a responsive echo in the hearts of citizens of this great Republic. They are all Americans, whether they dwell in New England, in the far South, or on our Western plains.

The measure provides that the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to select a suitable site and to grant permission to the Jefferson Davis Chapter, No. 1650, United Daughters of the Confederacy, for the erection, as a gift to the people of the United States, on public grounds of the United States in the city of Washington, D. C., other than those of the Capitol, the Library of Congress, Potomac Park, and the White House, of a monument in memory of the faithful colored mammies of the South [applause]:

Provided, That the site chosen and the design of the memorial shall be approved by the Joint Library Committee of Congress, with the advice of the Commission of Fine Arts; that the monument shall be erected under the supervision of the Chief of Engineers: and that the United States shall be put to no expense in or by the erection of the said monument.

Aside from its merits, its approval and indorsement by the United Daughters of the Confederacy demands its careful and favorable consideration. It was introduced at the request of the Jefferson Davis Chapter, No. 1650, United Daughters of the Confederacy.

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The history of the United Daughters of the Confederacy is one resplendent with great deeds, many of them gilded with romantic luster which has cast its radiance throughout the world. This organization owes its origin and life to an association of Southern women beginning in the days of the War between the States for the purpose of caring for the wounded and, after the war was over, in providing cemeteries for the Confederate dead, many of whom slept upon the battle fields where they fell. When it was not possible to bring them home, they buried many of them at the same spot and erected a monument that the stranger might know he was treading on hallowed ground.

After the formation of the Confederate Veterans' Association many of these associations became known as Daughters of the Confederacy and later were organized as the United Daughters of the Confederacy. I have thought it not amiss to refer briefly to an organization, a chapter of which requests the passage of the bill.

During the days preceding the unfortunate War between the States was the era of Southern civilization, so often misrepresented and misunderstood. Whilst a period of many trials, it was an era of glory. It gave to the world such names as Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe as models for the emulation and example of the young men of the land. Later on the names of Robert E. Lee—by common consent one of the foremost commanders of the English-speaking race—Stonewall Jackson, whose achievements have lighted up with historic interest the beauties of the Shenandoah Valley, and others; it sent an army to the battle field which suffered the greatest percentage of loss known in modern warfare with a fortitude which challenged the admiration of brave men in every land from the rising to the setting sun; it furnished statesmen, scholars, and orators whose names have illumined the brightest pages of history.

The colored mammies of the South lived in and were a part of this civilization. No one, except the youth of that generation, can realize the mutual devotion of the colored mammies of the South and those whom they served. They were educated by their young mistresses, and their characters molded by them. The fidelity of these colored mammies has scarcely a parallel in history. The safety and comfort of "their children," as they called the boys and girls whom they nursed, gave them contentment and happiness. They watched them with tenderness and care, and sang them to sleep with their plantation songs. They could not be seduced from their love and loyalty by either promise of reward or threats of violence. Numerous instances of their fidelity are recorded in the traditions of the South.

Many a boy who followed the banners of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson dreamed happily as he rested at night upon the fields of northern Virginia, his face turned toward the stars, as the voice of his colored mammy came to him again with its lullaby, bringing happy visions of his home. When these boys enlisted in the War between the States their colored mammies accompanied them to the trains on which they departed and there gave them their blessings, and upon their

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return, many of them wounded and mangled, these faithful colored mammies remained with them to the end and assisted in the last rites of their burial. Their devotion was returned with genuine affection and love. No one in the homes where they dwelt treated them with disrespect, nor was anyone allowed to do so. The children when aggrieved by any wrong or fancied wrong, ran to them for redress. They had the confidence of all, and it was rarely betrayed. They desired no change in their condition of life. No class of any race of people in bondage could be found anywhere who lived more free from care and distress. The very few who are left look back to those days as the happy and golden hours of their lives.

The request contained in the bill should be granted and the monument be erected. Upon it let there be no inscription save these words:

In commemoration of the faithful colored mammies of the South.
By the Jefferson Davis Chapter, No. 1650,
United Daughters of the Confederacy.

The traveler, as he passes by, will recall that epoch of southern civilization, when men were brave and women gentle and true, whose history has ever been and ever will be an inspiration to the people of every land who honor fidelity and loyalty, whether an attribute of the great and mighty or the low and humble. [Applause.]

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